

NOVEMBER 13.

The President, Dr. LEIDY, in the chair.

Twenty-nine persons present.

The following was ordered to be published :—

**OBITUARY NOTICE OF CHARLES F. PARKER.**

BY ISAAC C. MARTINDALE.

When a man has given to the service of the public good the best years of his life, and that life perhaps shortened in consequence of his devotion and faithfulness to known duties, it should rest with some survivor to so place upon the historic page this record, that perchance some disconsolate and weary follower, ready to faint by the way, "seeing may take heart again." For such a life is a conspicuous mark on the highway of honest endeavor, and a beacon light ever before the devoted inquirer after truth.

Hence I have assumed to place herein a notice of the life and services of Charles F. Parker, late Curator-in-charge of this Academy.

His parents resided in Philadelphia, where he was born on the 9th day of November, 1820. His mother dying when he was but an infant, he was deprived of a mother's love to stimulate and encourage him in his undertakings.

His father, being in humble circumstances, was able to give him but a limited education. Charles, as soon as he was old enough to be of any service, was apprenticed to bookbinding; his father having long been engaged in that business.

He remained in Philadelphia until about the age of 22 years, when he went to Boston and engaged in the same business. After residing there about two years he married Martha Kellom, and in 1851 left Boston and moved to Leominster, where he opened a book-store, and carried on bookbinding on his own account. This business enterprise, not being so successful as he had hoped, was abandoned in 1853, and he removed to Camden, New Jersey, where he resided during the remainder of his life.

About two years after the death of his mother, his father married again, and when the father died in 1835, his widow continued to carry on the bookbinding, and Charles became a partner and assumed the management of the business, subsequently conducting the work on his own account.

As a business man he was extremely conscientious in having his work performed at the exact time that had been agreed upon; and he attained an enviable reputation as a neat workman—to such an extent, that services in his business which required the utmost care and nicety were sure to be sent to him to be performed, and he would not undertake any kind of work that was expected to be done in a cheap or hurried manner. Having the oversight and employment of others for many years, his just treatment of them always gave him the choice of the best workmen, and those who were satisfactory remained year after year in his employ.

During the earlier part of his life he did not manifest any especial interest in natural history; yet for a long time he was a companion of C. S. Rafinesque, the well-known naturalist, who boarded in the same house. This was during the latter part of the life of Rafinesque, when he was engaged in the manufacture of medicines, which he contended were for the relief of “all the ills that flesh is heir to.” The writer has repeatedly heard narrated some of the incidents in the life of this naturalist which occurred during those years, and which seemed to have made a lasting impression on the mind of our friend C. F. Parker; so much so that I am led to believe the love for natural science, which developed in the later years of his life, was from some of the seed then sown. One of these incidents, so characteristic of the eccentric Rafinesque, may be mentioned here: Charles was quite fond of remaining in bed at a later hour in the morning than usual when he was not expected to be at his place of business, and often entertained himself by singing some favorite tune; on one such occasion Rafinesque heard the usual melodious sounds, and went to the room door, which he quickly opened, exclaiming,

“He who sings in bed instead of sleeping,  
And whistles at the table instead of eating,  
Is either crazy or soon will be.”

Having thus relieved his mind, he went away to his own quiet

musings, which he did not seek to brighten by such displays of levity or cheer.

Very soon after making Camden his home, Charles became interested in conchology, although he had never seen a collection of shells, nor known anything of their scientific arrangement or method of study; neither was he acquainted with any one at work in that department of natural history. His attention also became directed towards insects, especially butterflies and beetles, and learning that a society had been formed for their study, he applied for membership in the Entomological Society of Philadelphia, and was elected November 11, 1861.

This brought him in contact with men of science, and gave him an opportunity to examine books and specimens that he had never known of before, opening a new life and infusing a zeal which increased with advancing years.

The study of conchology and entomology opened the way for other branches of natural history; and having become a frequent visitor at this Academy, he was brought into intimate relations with several of its members who were pursuing the study of botany and making collections of plants in the immediate neighborhood of Philadelphia. He soon became interested with them in their pursuits, and took up the same study with especial zeal. Withal, he never neglected his business, nor failed to keep his appointments and engagements therein. He was elected to membership in the Academy on the 29th of August, 1865, and forthwith entered heartily into work, for it will be remembered that at this time the collections were not well arranged, owing to the limited space occupied, and the want of means to secure the services of competent workmen; so that almost all of the labor performed was voluntary and gratuitous.

His earliest labors in the Academy were directed to the conchological collection, and for seven years he devoted a large portion of the time that could be spared from his business to its systematic arrangement, preparing and mounting during that period about one hundred thousand specimens, in a style which, for neatness and adaptability for scientific study, has not been excelled. This labor, perhaps the greatest volunteer work ever done in the Academy, was only finished a short time before it became necessary to pack the Academy's museum for removal to the present building; he immediately engaged in this labor, and

had already devoted much time to it, when it became apparent to his fellow-members that the Academy would be greatly benefited by employing him permanently for a compensation. In 1874 he was elected one of the Curators, and on solicitation was induced to partially give up his business as a bookbinder and accept the meagre amount which the Society could afford to pay him, giving in return the greater part of his time to its work. The entire museum was removed under his direction and arranged in cases in this building in a very short period—the actual removal being accomplished in about a month, the unpacking and display in the cases in about five months. He has been annually re-elected one of the Curators of the Academy at successive elections, invariably receiving the full number of votes cast, however many candidates were in nomination, thus showing the value and appreciation of his services.

Although he continued his interest in the study of conchology and entomology, and made quite extensive collections in both of these departments, he seemed to have taken an especial fondness for the study of botany, which he never afterward allowed to falter. He was one of the first to discover that the ballast deposits in and around Philadelphia and Camden were prolific in introduced plants, and his knowledge of conchology sometimes enabled him to determine the part of the world from which those deposits came, as occasionally fragments of shells were found therein.

In one of his journeyings to the swamps of Cape May County he met Coe F. Austin, the noted cryptogrammic botanist, who died at Closter, N. J., a few years ago, and who at that time was engaged in the study of the flora of New Jersey. There at once sprang up a real friendship between them, which increased as time advanced, terminating only when Austin died. The interest, however, which had been created to endeavor to complete a list of the plants of New Jersey was not allowed to abate; and for several years past, in connection with other botanists, the work has been approaching completion to such an extent that a preliminary catalogue has been compiled by N. L. Britton, and printed under the auspices of the Geological Survey of New Jersey, in which the name of C. F. Parker frequently appears. Probably no botanist has made more frequent visits to the pine barrens and swamps of that State, nor collected so extensively

of her flora, as he did ; the same ready tact displayed in the work of his hands everywhere has been especially noticeable in the preparation of his herbarium specimens ; they are at once characteristic and good, so much so that exchanges were desired from him by the noted botanists of the country, and to-day his specimens enrich many private collections and herbariums of institutions of the United States and Europe. The collection of New Jersey plants which he has left is one of the finest and most perfect that exists, and of itself is a monument of patience and skill of which any one might feel proud.

The annual reports of the officers of the Academy, of late years, show somewhat of the service he has rendered. The mounting of specimens presented, and their arrangement, has been one of great labor, requiring skill, patience and care. The neatness displayed, so characteristic of the man, has made the collections of the Academy of inestimable value to the scientific world and an ornament to the institution itself. Since occupying its present building, between thirty and forty thousand additional specimens of shells have been received, all of which have been mounted by him, and nearly all outside of the hours in which he was employed by the Academy, and without compensation. He was one of the founders of the Conchological Section and of the Botanical Section, and was active in their proceedings.

It has well been said he was a born naturalist ; he had a quick eye and good judgment in perceiving and estimating specific characters, and an excellent memory. His knowledge of conchology was probably almost as extensive as his acquirements in botany, although he was, perhaps, more widely known in the latter department. What he knew he was always ready to impart to others, and the many naturalists who have consulted the collections of the Academy during his curatorship invariably received from him valuable and generous aid.

The service which he gave to this Academy, the self-sacrificing devotion to its interests ever manifested by him, proved at last to be the weapon of his own destruction. In the early part of the present year his health rapidly gave way, so that he was obliged to refrain from continuous work. The Council of the Academy, mindful of his eminent services, unanimously granted him leave of absence for the summer months, in order that rest might, if possible, restore his wasted energies and give back

to the Academy his invaluable services; but too late! The disease gradually assumed a more serious character, and at last paralysis of the brain set in, which terminated his life on the seventh day of September, 1883, in the sixty-third year of his age.

My acquaintance with him, extending back nearly a quarter of a century, has given me full opportunity to know his character and judge of his worth. Had he been favored with good opportunities for school education in early years, he doubtless would have ranked among the eminent scientists of the day; yet the record which he has left of overcoming the many obstacles of life, of his rigid adherence to right, his extremely conscientious desire to be found faithful in all his undertakings, and the work of his hands in all the departments in which he found engagement, have given him a record and a name which must ever remain; whilst the memory of his many social qualities well known to me serves to make up the triplicate of naturalist, companion, and friend.

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NOVEMBER 20.

The President, Dr. LEIDY, in the chair.

Twenty-nine persons present.

The following were presented for publication:—

“Notes on American Fishes preserved in the Museums at Berlin, London, Paris and Copenhagen,” by David S. Jordan.

“The Occident Ant in Dakota,” by Rev. H. C. McCook.

“Staining with Hæmatoxylon,” by Chas. L. Mitchell, M. D.

The death of John L. LeConte, M. D., a member, was announced.

The following was ordered to be printed:—